

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 314159 TOSEC 340165

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.-STADIS- FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ARA- SHLAUDEMAM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PA

SUBJECT: PANAMA CANAL/MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

REFERENCE: SECTO 34019

1. THE BOMBING INCIDENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE CANAL ZONE DURING LATE OCTOBER RESULTED IN AN EXPANDED US SECURITY EFFORT. SINCE THAT TIME SOLDIERS FROM THE 193RD INFANTRY BATTALION, STATIONED IN THE CANAL ZONE, HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED ADDITIONAL DUTIES IN GUARDING US INSTALLATIONS, ESTABLISHING CHECKPOINTS FOR OBSERVING US AND PANAMANIAN CIVILIAN TRAFFIC WITHIN THE ZONE AND FOR OTHER ASPECTS.

2. THE PROPOSED 60-DAY DEPLOYMENT OF A MILITARY POLICE COMPANY (APPROXIMATELY 150 MEN) IS TO RELIEVE THE 193RD INFANTRYMEN WHO HAVE HAD TO PUT IN EXTRA TIME AND FOREGO NORMAL HOLIDAY LEAVE. THE DEPLOYMENT WOULD ALSO SERVE TO
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REDUCE SOME OF THE RISKS INVOLVED IN THE INCREASED SECURITY EFFORT AS THE MILITARY POLICE HAVE HAD PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN DEALING WITH CIVILIANS.

3. IT IS CURRENTLY PLANNED THAT THE MILITARY POLICE COMPANY WOULD BE AIRLIFTED INTO THE ZONE FROM THE UNITED

STATES WITH THEIR ARRIVAL AT HOWARD AIR FORCE BASE SCHEDULED FOR NOT LATER THAN JANUARY 5, 1977. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEIR ARRIVAL AND DEPLOYMENT WITHIN THE ZONE WOULD BE HANDLED IN A LOW KEY WAY.

4. AMBASSADOR JORDEN HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE GOVERNOR OF THE CANAL ZONE AND THE CINC IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE EXPANDED SECURITY EFFORT OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS AND CONCURRED IN THE RECENT PROPOSAL TO DEPLOY THE MILITARY POLICE COMPANY.

5. WE CONTACTED JORDEN THIS MORNING BY SECURE PHONE TO OBTAIN HIS JUDGEMENT ON WHETHER THERE WERE ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN PANAMA WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN A FINAL DECISION. HE INDICATED THAT THE CINC STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THE DEPLOYMENT, THAT HE CONCURRED FULLY, AND THAT IN HIS JUDGEMENT THE POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS IN PANAMA WERE MINIMAL.

6. THE UNDERLYING QUESTION, (WHICH NOBODY SEEMS TO HAVE ADDRESSED) IS THE CONTINUED NEED FOR INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES GIVEN THE PASSAGE OF TIME, TORRIJOS' DECISION NOT TO PRESS TOO FAR IN RESPONSE TO OUR DEMARCHES ON THE BOMBINGS, PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND CLEARLY POSITIVE PANAMANIAN EXPECTATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE NEXT US ADMINISTRATION. BEFORE MAKING A RECOMMENDATION TO YOU, I AM ASKING JORDEN, CINCSOUTH AND THE CANAL ZONE GOVERNOR TO CONSIDER THE NEED TO MAINTAIN ENHANCED SECURITY.

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